

WHEN SKY THIEF COMES

Acroplane in Crime, as Well as in War, May Soon Be Seen.

Now that aeroplane companies engage to turn out a machine for anybody at catalogue prices and skilled pilots are counted by the score and multiply from month to month those who have watched the growth of aviation most closely are speculating upon the probable appearance of the aeroplane burglar, or "sky pirate," as he might be called. He is not likely to be long in coming once the noise of the aerial motor can be suppressed.

The aeroplane's best friends have to own that its very virtues fit it for a career of crime. It goes fast and far, it leaves no track behind, it can escape from any pursuer except one of its own kin, and even then a chase would be a most uncertain one. Worst of all, if the bird-man is minded rather like a vulture than like an eagle he can strike his prey in its most vulnerable part. The easiest access to a locked house is to be had from overhead, as any city dweller can see for himself if he will go up and look at the door in his own roof.

A hinge of strap iron, or at best an iron bar, fastened with a padlock that would yield like paper to a skillfully handled "jimmy," is all that prevents the ordinary trapdoor from being lifted from without. Indeed, the roof is the usual route of the robber of vacant houses, and it is only the difficulty of reaching it that keeps such crimes from being far more common than they are.

Only one step more in aviation is needed to make the aeroplane the burglar's mount. It must be made to alight upon a restricted space, such as the roof of a house, and to go up from the same spot without difficulty. When that time has come it is easy to forecast what is likely to happen.

First the police will hear frequent complaints that vacant houses have been entered by way of the roof. Perhaps a caretaker will tell of hearing strange sounds overhead at night. A silver paper knife, which is recognized as part of the missing plunder, is found by a milkman in a customer's backyard in Williamsbridge.

A detective puts forth the theory that the robbers fled by aeroplane and dropped the knife by accident. The newspapers take it up and urge a more stringent enforcement of the aviation laws. Policemen are ordered to shoot at aeroplanes which fly by night without the distinguishing lights required under the statutes.

Then an old caretaker is found with his skull crushed in, the house looted and the trapdoor open, and a policeman recalls seeing an aeroplane start from that house the night before. The whole country is aroused.

There is a new cry of police incompetence. Wealthy amateurs, taken with the novelty of the thing, offer their services to the department, which sets them to watch from the high hotel roofs. One night a rocket soars up over the city. It is the signal which every policeman has been prepared to give, and it points the culprit's line of flight toward the west.

With a whirl of angry engines one of the waiting machines swoops from her perch. Swiftly she climbs upward, hunting for her quarry. Her two men see the shining double chain of Broadway lights wink out at one place and then flash back again. That was where the pirate craft went by. The pursuers swerve toward her trail, leaping in a terrific downward glide. The man in uniform sees her first and points her out to his taut nerved companion. They have the upper plane of her, and as they follow her out above the silent river the man at the wheel coaxes his quivering mount higher and higher still.

At a word from him the man in uniform unfolds the wicked little four-flaked anchor. With a turn of its silken cord brought around the aluminum keelpost he lowers it until it is swinging a hundred feet below them.

Now their prey is outlined against the great wall of electric signs that blazes along the Jersey shore. She is flying high, meaning to clear the Palisades if she can. And even at that her pursuer is a good three hundred feet higher than she is.

The man at the wheel wheedles a few more revolutions a second out of his groaning engines. Then, gently, he turns down the forward rudder. The great signs leap up at them, blurred through the tears that start behind the goggles. The silken anchor cord trails whistling behind them like the tail of a kite. That sickening plunge overtakes the fugitive as if she were standing still.

A scared face looks up at them; the dark craft tries to swerve, but it is too late. The pursuer goes over her like a whirlwind. The man at the wheel ramps her upward to take the shock, and then the assailants hear the crunching of metal as the little steel anchor sets its teeth in the pirate's frame.

Their aeroplane staggers and rocks with the tension. The man in uniform pays out the silken cord, and his hands are cut as it runs through them. But the first shock is safely over now, and he takes another turn of the line about a cleat and the great machine tugs at it again.

A shriek comes from below. The line slackens suddenly. They see the dark aeroplane reel and go sidewise, overturned, hopeless and out of control. The man in uniform cuts the line with

one sweep of the knife he had laid beside him for the purpose. In a fluttering, broken spiral the wounded machine plunges down four hundred feet into the Hudson, and is gone.

As the others wind their way to the shore, not fifty yards from the spot where the pirate fell, they hear a hail. Aground they find the robbers held by three watchmen, who, having seen the struggle in the air, hurried up to take a hand.

Just such a chase may never be seen in the skies of Manhattan. Certainly it will not until there are aeronauts of a different stamp from the fellows who take up the great flyers of today. A burglar alarm is a mighty good thing to have on that roof door, anyway. J. B., Jr.

DOWN WITH THE SHIP.

Heroic Captains Who Have Upheld Unwritten Law of Seas.

"The captain of the vessel shall be the last to leave."



THROWN FROM THE MAT IN A JAPANESE WRESTLING MATCH.

Sumo wrestling, the method peculiar to the Japanese, may be described as almost a religious ceremony. From early childhood boys are trained to devote their lives to this form of sport. They are not permitted to sit tailor fashion, the favorite attitude of the Japanese, so that their legs may grow longer, and they are fed more liberally upon meat than their fellow countrymen. The best wrestlers belong to a sort of religious brotherhood, and the proceeds of their wrestling go toward the upkeep of the priesthood of the Ekoin Temple, near Tokio. In-

This heroic sentiment was vividly exhibited a short time ago when Captain Sealby of the ill-fated Republic refused to leave his ship till every man, woman, child and member of his crew had been saved.

One of the bravest of these heroes was Chief Officer Paterson, of the British King. One day, a couple of winters ago, he sailed from New York under the command of Captain O'Hagan. Great storms impeded the passage of the ship, and so stupendous was the violence of the waves that they stove in the bow plates, and before the leakage was discovered tons of water rushed into the hold. Captain O'Hagan told his men to shift the cargo, but barrels and cases were hurtling this way and that, and one of them, driving his leg so severely that he had to be carried to the lifeboat.

For a brief space there was no captain. Then Paterson took command. At a critical moment his strong personality and calm assurance saved the crew from panic. Three boats, filled with sailors of the British King, were launched in safety while the new commander stood in silence on the bridge. Lower and lower sank the ill-starred ship, and as she heaved and took

her final plunge Paterson blew a farewell blast upon his whistle to the fast departing crew.

Quite different, but no less heroic, was the manner in which Captain Griffith of the Atlantic Transport Line steamship Mohegan faced death. Though it was scarcely darker than twilight, he had run his vessel on the rocks near the Needles in October, 1898, and it was rapidly sinking. The last glimpse of Captain Griffith showed him standing on the bridge ordering the boats to be lowered in order to save his crew.

Heroic in death, too, was the captain of the oil ship Loodiana, which several years ago was burned at sea. Before thinking of his own safety he saw every man of his crew clear of the doomed vessel—and then it was too late. Foot by foot he was driven forward by the flames, till at last he hung over the bow. A tramp steamship came up, but the waters were too rough for the lowering of the boats. Finally the flames compelled him to loosen his hold, and while his ship burned fiercely on he was dashed into the angry seas beneath.

But still more dramatic was the death of Captain Deloncle of the French liner La Bourgogne

CELLAR DOOR APOTHEOSIS

Gigantic Industry That Has Been Built on the Craving to Slide.

The male American, from the time when his first trousers make him feel proud, has just one passion that is stronger than his love for attending fires. It is his desire to slide down hill. If during those early years he finds a cellar door, banister, haymow or hillside of snow or slippery grass and does not try its friction on his trousers, then there is a good and painful reason for his temperance ten times out of every ten. The female American, who at a tender age makes herself as much like the male as she can, follows his example in this matter and slides whenever she dares to, minding her mamma only when she is afraid.

And even in grown-up days, when you see a particularly fine mahogany stair rail sweeping down from top to bottom of a house, with a graceful, rounded off spiral at the end and not a post or an obstruction anywhere—you know what is the first thing you think of. And if you were quite sure that nobody could possibly see you, and that you wouldn't fall off, and that you could catch yourself at the end, and that your stomach wouldn't get in the way and your glasses would stay on—well, of course you can't be sure of any of these things. Only if you could, who knows what might happen?

That longing to "let her rip," to surrender yourself unresistingly to the force of gravity, goes very deep into your being. It is civilized human nature crying out for contact with an essential force, crying to be set free, if only for an instant, from the paths of every day, humdrum existence. The longing is none the less deep because it seems ridiculous. It is a real, strong, primeval instinct. Now, in any strong human desire there is a great deal of money for the man who knows how to satisfy it and is willing to sell satisfaction at reasonable rates.

Hence the roller coaster. It stands in Scotland, in Coney Island, in Brazil, in Yucatan. It is numbered in tens of thousands, and millions ride in it every year. It has made its inventors millionaires. Yet they took only the essence, the spiritual part, of the cellar door, freed it from its homely surroundings, exalted it, elaborated it, capitalized it and made it a mint to coin the cellar door impulse into good currency. The mint works on a grand scale.

The first roller coaster was 450 feet long, and the highest drop on the line was one of ten feet. The thrill was somewhat more intense than that to be gained from a parlor rocking chair; it was rather more like the sensation of working a wooden lawn swing. To-day there is a roller coaster at Brighton Beach where the track is 116 feet high at one point, and there is a drop of eighty-five feet. When the car plunges down that descent the passenger literally leaves his seat for an instant, and as he sees Coney Island leaping up to meet him he knows how a baseball feels when a 400 batsman swings on it, with the bases full.

That first roller coaster cost \$1,500. The big scenic railways at Coney Island to-day cost about \$60,000 each. The smaller ones, such as are shipped out to Rio de Janeiro or Yokohama, represent an investment of \$40,000 each before they have carried a passenger. It is estimated that \$50,000,000 is invested in sliding amusements of one sort or another in the United States alone. More than half the population of the country lives within an hour's ride of one or another of them, for they are in a thousand of our cities. If the cellar door impulse is not turned into hard dollars it is certainly not for lack of the machinery to do it or of willingness to furnish the machinery. A single firm, the same which operated the first "switchback" in 1884, now has \$8,000,000 invested in the business. Its profits are enormous.

In one season a roller coaster frequently pays for itself. Earnings of less than 30 per cent for a season are rare. Two thousand dollars is a good figure for a Sunday's receipts. The fare is 10 cents a ride. That means that twenty thousand thrills of cellar door satisfaction have been minted into hard cash.

Go to Coney Island and see how natural the process is. When you have felt the cushioned seat plunge down from under you and have caught your breath to tide yourself over the big drop that is coming, and have felt the car charge up the next steep slope with a roar and a rush that is good to hear, and when you have grown supercilious at the easy motion with which it takes the later undulations, and then have had the whole ride all over again, you will come out at the end and be quite ready to own that it is well worth 10 cents and that you will ride again, to-day or next week, as circumstances may fall out. You have it firmly fixed in your mind that it is worth 10 cents.

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